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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 312th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 6 October 2008, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Badji ..... (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

2. **The Chairman**, after informing the Committee that the General Assembly had appointed Nicaragua to the Committee and welcoming the new member, informed members that on 16 September 2008, the Palestinian President had met with the Israeli Prime Minister to discuss permanent status issues under negotiation and that, on 25 September 2008, he had met with the President of the United States of America, who had pledged to continue working towards the creation of a viable Palestinian State.

3. At its meeting on 22 September 2008, while acknowledging Israel's security concerns, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee had noted with concern that access and movement restrictions were continuing to constrain Palestinian economic development, notwithstanding the budgetary support provided by the international community.

4. On 18 September 2008, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process had briefed the Security Council on the situation on the ground. At the request of Saudi Arabia, the Council had met on 26 September 2008 to address the issue of Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and, that same day, the Diplomatic Quartet had issued a statement calling upon the parties to continue their efforts to conclude an agreement before the end of the year and condemning both settler violence against Palestinian civilians and acts of terrorism against Israelis.

Developments in the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

5. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) noted that, despite the recent flurry of political activity on the Palestine question, the Annapolis process had thus far failed to deliver the promised political settlement. The parties should nonetheless continue their efforts to that end. He hoped that a new United States administration would galvanize the peace process, and that his Government would find a partner equally ready to negotiate in good faith on the Israeli side.

6. The Egyptian Government was working to facilitate reconciliation between Palestinian factions, with a view to achieving political unity within Palestine. The League of Arab States would take action based on the results of Egyptian mediating efforts. Given the considerable efforts being invested in the peace process since the Annapolis summit it might be possible to put an end to the Israeli occupation, establish an independent, sovereign State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital and bring about a just resolution of the Palestine refugee question in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

7. Despite the international consensus on the need for Israel to put an immediate halt to settlement activity and dismantle its West Bank outposts, there was no indication that Israel was planning to change its policy. The numerous checkpoints — some 600 in number — in the West Bank, and the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip, were making Palestinian economic development virtually impossible. Moreover, the continued presence of settlements in the West Bank effectively impeded negotiations. Israel must lift the blockade on Gaza and implement the Agreement on Movement and Access and the international community must intensify its pressure on Israel, so as to bring about a change in Israel's behaviour and in its approach to final status negotiations.

8. His Government would not accept any partial agreements; any settlement reached must satisfactorily address all key final status-related issues, namely, borders, the status of Jerusalem, Palestine refugees, Israeli settlements, water and security. He hoped that the new Israeli Prime Minister would heed the encouraging — albeit late — conclusion arrived at by the incumbent on the necessity of withdrawal to pre-1967 borders. Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, along with the establishment of a State of Palestine and a just solution to the Palestine refugee question would lead to normalization of Israeli relations with all Arab and Muslim nations; that, in turn, would bring about a dramatic change in conditions throughout the Middle East.

Consideration of the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly (A/AC.183/2008/CRP.2)

9. **Mr. Borg** (Malta), Rapporteur, introducing the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly, drew particular attention to paragraphs 92 through 102 and said that, in accordance with established practice,

the Secretariat would continue to update the draft as necessary, in consultation with the Rapporteur.

10. **Mr. Al-Allaf** (Observer for Jordan), making a general comment, said that the Committee played a pivotal role in documenting the facts relating to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, not least in the context of the establishment of a viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in peaceful coexistence with Israel and other neighbouring States. In that connection, he noted that the will of the Palestinian people remained unbroken, notwithstanding the 60 years of arbitrary Israeli practices to which they had been subjected since Al-Nakba.

11. Highlighting two issues of particular concern to his Government, he urged the Committee to focus on Israeli settlement activities, which posed a major obstacle to the peace process, and on the excavations under way in the vicinity of the Al-Aqsa mosque, notably around Bab al-Magharibah. Those excavations threatened not only to destroy the foundations of the mosque but also to alter its very character. Another fear was that the area might in future be used by Israel for military purposes. With a view to preserving the Palestinian and Islamic heritage of such an important monument for Muslims worldwide, his Government had brought the matter to the attention of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; the latter had subsequently called for a halt to the excavations.

12. **Mr. Falouh** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic), supported by **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine), proposed that, in the fourth line of paragraph 24, the word "strongly" should be inserted before the word "condemned".

13. *It was so decided.*

14. **The Chairman** said that if he heard no objections, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft report as orally amended.

15. *It was so decided.*

Other matters

16. **The Chairman** announced that one staff member from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian Authority had commenced the Committee's 2008 training programme for such staff at the Division of Palestinian Rights and that a second was expected to participate. Now in its thirteenth year, the programme was designed to familiarize young Palestinian professionals with the work of the United Nations in order to enhance their understanding of its goals and activities. Twenty-five such officers had thus far benefited from the programme.

17. **Mr. Dorani** (Department of Public Information) added that nine Palestinian journalists were shortly due to commence a six-week training programme run by the Department. A total of 120 Palestinian journalists had benefited from that programme thus far.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.